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SIS, Grigori Tokaev, and the London Controlling Section: New perspectives on a Cold War defector and Cold War deception

Lieutenant Colonel Grigori Aleksandrovich Tokaev defected to British intelligence officers in Germany in October 1947. He was the first senior Soviet official to do so, and was codenamed EXCISE. His defection occurred when Britain was struggling to gather significant intelligence on the USSR, and when Soviet propaganda was increasing in its volume and ferocity.¹ British officials attempted to use him to remedy both problems. Tokaev was an experienced aeronautical engineer who, prior to his defection, had worked in the Zukov Military/Air Academy, served as the Joint General Secretary of the Russian section of the allied secretariat in Germany, and the Air Force Department of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany; the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6) and the Security Service (MI5) debriefed him thoroughly, believing that his intelligence could provide valuable insights into Stalin's strategic weapons programmes.² Later, the Information Research Department (IRD), Britain's propaganda outfit, attempted to use his defection and his writings to undermine morale in the Soviet armed forces and encourage others to defect.³ The significance of his academic expertise and his subsequent public profile in Britain ensured that his case has received a significant amount of scrutiny, much of it critical. Recently released files, however, indicate that his role was broader than hitherto understood. SIS and the IRD were not the only agencies interested in Tokaev; he also attracted Britain's enigmatic deception planners in the London Controlling Section (LCS). The new material illustrates how Tokaev interacted with the LCS, and how the LCS attempted to use Britain's prized defector when planning and implementing its schemes. This note offers fresh insights into Tokaev's defection and into the extremely secretive world of Cold War strategic deception.

Tokaev and deception in Cold War historiography

There is a stark contrast between the historical prominence of Tokaev and the relative absence of deception from the historiography of the Cold War.⁴ The former was subject to significant publicity

¹ W. K. Wark 'Coming in from the Cold: British Propaganda and Red Army Defectors, 1945-1952', *The International History Review* 9 (1987), p.48.

² P Maddrell, *Spying on Science: Western Intelligence in Divided Germany, 1945-1961* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), p.70.

³ See Wark 'Coming in from the Cold'.

⁴ As Andrew Defty presents, the IRD publicised his case in *The Times*, *The Sunday Express*, and on the BBC. A. Defty *Britain, America, and Anti-Communist Propaganda, 1945-53* (London, Frank Cass, 2003) p.191. Tokaev features in several studies of British intelligence and the Soviet strategic threat, as well as British intelligence and Soviet defectors, e.g. R. J. Aldrich *British Intelligence Strategy and the Cold War, 1945-51* (Hoboken, Routledge, 1992); B. Cole 'British technical intelligence and the Soviet intermediate range ballistic missile threat, 1952-60', *Intelligence and National Security* 14 (1999); H. Dylan, *Defence Intelligence and the Cold War: Britain's Joint Intelligence Bureau, 1945-1964* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014); P. Hoffman 'The making of national estimates during the period of the 'missile gap'', *Intelligence and National Security* 1 (1986). He also engaged in self-publicity, e.g. his G. A. Tokaev 'Soviet Rocket Technology' *Technology and Culture* 4 (1963).

and engaged in substantial self-publication almost from the moment of his defection. The IRD utilised Tokaev's break with Stalin's regime in its propaganda materials soon after his intelligence debrief. They sought to exploit his motives, particularly his abhorrence of the USSR's policy of kidnapping German scientists, to encourage others to follow him.⁵ SIS exploited his story in secret, but managed to generate unwelcome publicity when, unauthorised, Tokaev and his SIS minder transported a defector from the American zone in Berlin back to Britain.⁶ Tokaev moved on to publish three books with the cooperation of his handlers, *Stalin Means War*, *Betrayal of an Ideal*, and *Comrade X*, and then pursued an academic career at Imperial College, Cranfield, Northampton, and City University of London.⁷ He died in 2003; national newspapers carried his obituary.⁸

Tokaev's profile as the first senior Soviet defector to Britain and his academic speciality all but ensured his case received considerable scrutiny amongst academics and journalists studying British intelligence. His knowledge of Soviet rocketry and strategic development arrived at a prescient time, when SIS, and British intelligence in general, struggled to penetrate Soviet institutions and communications.⁹ Despite his claim not to have offered SIS any information that would be considered a state secret in the USSR, research into his debriefing and its effect on British assessment indicates otherwise.¹⁰ For the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) he was a figure of considerable interest, a key window on the USSR in the nascent Cold War. In his official history of SIS, Keith Jeffery notes that Tokaev produced a great deal of intelligence 'of varying quality'.¹¹ Several other authors have expanded upon this in their studies of British scientific and technical intelligence and its influence on British policy. Tokaev's intelligence included details of the conditions Soviet rocket scientists were forced to endure;¹² the genesis of an indigenous Soviet guided rocket programme;¹³ the aims of that programme, and a scientific order-of-battle; and the importance the Soviets attached to adapting and developing their own version of the German V2 rocket.¹⁴ His intelligence had a significant impact on early Cold War British intelligence estimates of the Soviet strategic threat.

Historians have, however, raised questions about the value of Tokaev's contribution. They underline two particular problems with his intelligence. First, that it reinforced British preconceptions about the weakness of Soviet science. Second, that it placed undue emphasis on the re-engineering and development of German weapons in Soviet strategy. With regards the first issue, as Aldrich notes, despite the Soviets' considerable technological achievements during the war, many in British intelligence harboured a level of contempt for Soviet scientists and their future potential that

⁵ Wark 'Coming in from the Cold', p.59.

⁶ K. Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949* (London, Bloomsbury, 2010), p.666.

⁷ S. Dorril, *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations* (London, Fourth Estate, 2000), p.148; N.West, *Historical Dictionary of Cold War Counterintelligence* (London, Scarecrow Press, 2007), p.345.

⁸ See *The Independent* 'Professor Grigory Tokati: Rocket scientist who denounced the Stalinist regime', 25 November, 2003.

⁹ R.J. Aldrich, *GCHQ: The Uncensored Story of Britain's Most Secret intelligence Agency* (London, HarperPress, 2010), pp.80-81.

¹⁰ Dorril, *MI6*, p.148.

¹¹ Jeffery, *MI6*, p.666.

¹² R. J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2001), p.218.

¹³ Dorril, *MI6*, p.146.

¹⁴ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.70-77.

bordered on outright xenophobia. Tokaev's reports of the manner in which Soviet scientists were harassed by the security forces in concentration camp-like environments did little to change this, and belied their rapid progress in aeronautics and nuclear technologies.¹⁵ With regards the second, a number of scholars judge that Tokaev's intelligence was misleading because he lacked insight into native Soviet research. The main proponents of this view are Paul Maddrell and Matthias Uhl. In his detailed critique of Tokaev's contribution, Maddrell notes that both problems led to mistaken assessments, an underestimation of the Soviets' rate of progress, and several shocks. He judges that much of Tokaev's material was hearsay, but 'accurate hearsay.'¹⁶ The Soviets certainly wished to develop the V2, but, contrary to Tokaev's information, they also prioritised developing a capability to strike their enemy's homelands. This requirement was put to Soviet scientists in March 1947, and they developed novel designs to meet the challenge by developing intercontinental ballistic missiles.¹⁷ Tokaev, based as he was in Germany, seems not to have been aware of this; as Maddrell argues, he 'encouraged his debriefers to underestimate the USSR's missile engineers.'¹⁸ Although he supplied intelligence on the general direction of Soviet research, he misled Britain as to its precise trajectory.

Britain's deception organisation was reformed for the nuclear age at about the same time as Tokaev's defection, but has enjoyed a markedly different historical profile.¹⁹ The LCS, and the strategic deception machinery, had only barely avoided wholesale dissolution at the end of the Second World War. Only three officers remained in 1946. However, following Sir Henry Tizard's report on the future of warfare it was revived, refitted for the Cold War, and went on to plan and implement a number of creative deceptions across the globe. It is only comparatively recently that historians have been able to begin tracing the development of this organisation and its activities. Glimpses into its work are visible in certain texts on British nuclear history: Cathcart, for example, in 1994 noted that the first British nuclear test was accompanied by a deception operation.²⁰ But even at the turn of the millennium leading historians of British intelligence lacked precise details of the London Controlling Section or its successor, the Directorate of Forward Plans (DFP); all but a fragment of its activities remained unknown.²¹

Our understanding of deception in the Cold War remains rather fragmentary: we have insights into some organisational issues, some specific atomic operations, and some of the work of the LCS and DFP in Britain's end of empire struggles. But deception has generally been examined in the context of broader intelligence and military activity, rather than as a specific, specialised activity. Several

¹⁵ Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, pp.218-219.

¹⁶ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, p.70.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.72.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ [British deception in the Second World War has, of course, received extensive and authoritative examination, see M. Howard, *British intelligence in the Second World War: Vol. 5: Strategic Deception* \(HMSO, London, 1990\).](#)

²⁰ B. Cathcart, *Test of Greatness: Britain's Struggle for the Atomic Bomb* (John Murray, London, 1994), p.174. For more on this operation see H. Dylan, 'Operation Tigris: Deception for counterintelligence and Britain's 1952 atomic test', *Journal of Intelligence History* 14 (2015).

²¹ R. J. Aldrich, *Espionage, Security, and Intelligence in Britain, 1945-1970* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998); Aldrich *The Hidden Hand*; P. Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders Since 1945* (Penguin, London, 2000); P. Hennessy, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (Penguin, London, 2007). The most comprehensive study of the organisation of deception in the early post war years is J. Lewis, *Changing Direction: British Military Planning for Post-War Strategic Defence, 1942-47* (London, Frank Cass, 2003).

factors account for this, some contemporary and some historical. Foremost amongst them is official secrecy. The vast majority of the LCS and DFP's Cold War files remain under lock and key. In 2010, according to The National Archive's catalogue, only nine files of the DEFE 28 series – where LCS and DFP documents are stored – were available; in 2005 there were six. Today the file descriptions for the entire series are available, but the overwhelming majority of operational records remain retained by the Ministry of Defence.²²

Circumventing current official secrecy by examining other departments' records is also problematic as deception operations in the 1940s and 1950s were, unsurprisingly, exceedingly secret even by the standards of Britain's secret state. Knowledge was limited to only a handful of officials and very few documents on proposed or ongoing operations were circulated. From the earliest days of its Cold War existence the LCS and its superiors stressed the requirement to keep distribution as tight as possible. The JIC minutes that deal with deception policy, management, and organisations were retained in a confidential annex, and the subject was noted in the agenda as simply 'Policy for a Certain Organisation'.²³ General Leslie Hollis, chair of 'the Hollis Committee', established to manage deception policy, reprimanded his officials sharply when they sent him a copy of the agenda for the Committee's first meeting with an explicit description of the LCS's activities. 'I cannot possibly circulate an agenda with all this open reference to "Deception", "Weapons of Mass Destruction", and "The Spread of Communism"', he noted, adding 'you have no idea how many people will start making enquiries. If you must issue an agenda, each item must be under a completely innocuous heading which will invite no interest from anyone other than those who know something about this business.'²⁴ His instructions appear to have been followed. The Director's name was omitted from Chiefs of Staff (COS) agendas and forecasts 'for security reasons'.²⁵ And 'all reference to strategic deception plans, operations or any statement from which the existence of plans, etc., or their methods of implementation could be inferred' was graded 'top secret'.²⁶ Indeed, the deception staff's documentary anonymity was such that certain officials, unfamiliar with the conventions, wondered whether or not the deception planners had actually been invited to Chiefs of Staff Committee meetings, prompting the Committee Secretary, Ronald. W. Ewbank, to quote Walter Scott's *Marmion* in frustration:²⁷

'Oh! What a tangled web we weave,
when first we practice to Deceive.'

In short, because of the security surrounding deception after the war historians have had remarkably few leads to follow.

Recent documentary releases (some prompted by freedom of information requests) afford us the opportunity to begin redressing this historiographical imbalance and offer us a new perspective on

²² This is based on the 'record opening date' filtering facility that is available on The National Archive catalogue. See <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/search/advanced-search>.

²³ The National Archives (TNA) DEFE 28/76, Gleadell to JIC and Secretary JPS, 2 July 1947.

²⁴ TNA, DEFE 28/76, Hollis to Saunders, 19 September 1947.

²⁵ TNA, CAB 121/110, Ewbank 'Attendance of Director of Forward Plans and Chiefs of Staff Meetings', 28 January 1953.

²⁶ TNA, CAB 121/110, 'Office Note: Directorate of Forward Plans', undated.

²⁷ TNA, CAB 121/110, Ewbank 'Attendance of Director of Forward Plans and Chiefs of Staff Meetings', 28 January 1953.

deception and Tokaev's Cold War role. They illustrate how SIS and the LCS worked to use Tokaev's intelligence to devise more effective deceptions against Stalin's USSR, and offer insights into many of the techniques at the deceivers' disposal in the late 1940s. They reveal an organisation working in extremely difficult conditions, against a powerful and secretive enemy, and reinforce the judgement that Tokaev, despite his value as a prominent defector, was often difficult to manage and exploit.²⁸

Tokaev, SIS, and the London Controlling Section

The existing historiography outlines various aspects of Tokaev's defection to Britain and his subsequent work. The records of the Permanent Undersecretary outline details of Tokaev's debriefs, and the evolution of his propaganda role.²⁹ Files from the DEFE 28 series add colour and detail on some of this, but also reveal entirely new perspectives. They reveal that the defector was in close contact with the deception machinery relatively soon after his defection; they cast a little more light on how he was managed; they cast light on the work he performed for the Foreign Office and SIS, and how various organisations evaluated his usefulness; they reveal the Soviets' attempts to discredit him; and they reveal how he was included in various aspects of operational planning for the London Controlling Section's strategic deceptions. It is clear that, just like the broader intelligence and foreign policy machinery, the LCS was desperately lacking of detailed insights into the USSR in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and that this was a significant impediment to planning and implementing effective operations. Tokaev, for all his problems, was considered a potentially valuable asset to the organisation at a difficult time.

Tokaev defected with deep contempt for Stalin's USSR and in fear for his life. During his time in Germany, when he was tasked with acquiring and exploiting German scientific and engineering advances, particularly jet engines, he had become concerned about the manner in which the Soviet authorities were treating German scientists. He claimed to have been in contact with several émigré organisations. By 1947 several of his co-conspirators had been arrested and he believed the Soviet security authorities were hunting him. He attempted to defect to the Canadians, but was channelled towards the British.³⁰ SIS welcomed him. He was flown from Berlin to London, and put under the charge of Wilfred 'Biffy' Dunderdale's Special Liaison Centre (SLC), based at Ryder Street in London.³¹ The SLC was something of an anomaly in SIS's organisational architecture. It was part of the 'production' side of the Service, and is described by Jeffery as 'the rump of Biffy Dunderdale's wartime empire and embodied his carefully nurtured liaison arrangements begun with the prewar French and later adding the Polish intelligence service.' It was 'an operation with a "highly specialised staff of Russian-speakers, mostly of Russian Origin" engaged in collecting, processing and distributing Russian-language material, some of which was provided by the Poles.'³² According to

²⁸ A limited insight into Tokaev's work with the LCS is available in H. Dylan, 'Super-weapons and Subversion: British deterrence by deception operations in the early Cold War', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38 (2015).

²⁹ See TNA FO 1093/548 and FO 1903/549.

³⁰ TNA FO 1093/551, 'A study of defectors from the USSR' August 1948.

³¹ Dorril, *MI6*, p.147.

³² Jeffery, *MI6*, p.625.

Davies, soon after the war the SLC was involved in coordinating partisan operations in the Baltics.³³ By 1947 it also handled suitable defectors.³⁴

Tokaev was significant to several British intelligence and propaganda organisations. But as time passed the matter of handling him became something of a fraught issue. He was of great interest to the LCS from the outset, and they considered him an asset for longer than many other agencies. Indeed, by March 1950, as SIS's counterintelligence department, R.5, started to lose interest in Tokaev, the deception organisation attempted to adopt him. Col. Noel Wild wrote to Dunderdale stressing that an officer of the LCS (whose name is redacted from the documents, but who may be a Mr A. Chelley) 'played a conspicuous part in the handling of Excise ever since 1947, and still continues to be the main link not only from a language point of view, but as someone in whom Excise has complete confidence and is ready to confide in. It is suggested therefore that [***] should continue in this role and so that Excise can come more directly under his control, administration should be switched from R.5 to L.S.C. [sic.]'³⁵ Other departments may have also attempted to poach Tokaev. Dorril notes that he was 'passed on' to the IRD once he was debriefed for his knowledge of Soviet missiles.³⁶

It appears, however, that he was only ever seconded to other departments, and that SIS and SLC kept their hand on the tiller for the duration of Tokaev's time as a major intelligence and propaganda asset. When Tokaev's missile intelligence and counter-intelligence value was considered exhausted, late in 1950, his sole stream of income from the secret services still flowed from the SLC. SIS's A.2 noted in December 1950 that 'C.S.S. agrees to a salary of up to [***] f.o.t. contingent on not less than six-monthly reviews. Subject should be given to understand that he is encouraged to become as self-supporting as possible by his writing, and that his emoluments from us will be subject to adjustment according to the extent of his earnings.' Tokaev was to be 'paid through the S.L.C's budget and to all intents and purposes regarded as an S.L.C. Agent. The work in which he is engaged as Consultant and Adviser on Russian Affairs, will be handled by S.L.C.' 'Even if the efforts of subject may be made use of by Col. Wild's office [the LCS] or I.R.D., subject will not receive any pay other than that through S.L.C.'³⁷

Despite being under SIS's control Tokaev was consulted by several agencies. He supplied SIS and the Foreign Office with detailed descriptions of Soviet forces in Germany, including profiles of senior

³³ P. Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying* (London, Frank Cass, 2004), p.206.

³⁴ Dorril, *MI6*, p.147.

³⁵ Curiously, and somewhat confusingly, the relevant document contains what appears to be two typing mistakes that make discerning the message somewhat problematic. The document contains two references to the 'LSC'. This, of course, could be a miss-typed reference to the LCS, the London Controlling Section, or the SLC, the Special Liaison Committee. The context suggests that it is the former: first, the note is authored by Noel Wild, an officer at the LCS. Second, the argument is that a transfer of responsibility would benefit the deception organisation. TNA, DEFE 28/182, Wild to Dunderdale, 'EXCISE', 29 March 1950. The identification of Chelley as Tokaev's handler is not certain; it is based on his presence at meetings with Tokaev, and the odd reference, for example 'That a small working part or planning team composed of Colonel Wild, [redacted, but probably Dunderdale], Mr. Drew and Major Kirby, be formed; this team should of course have the assistance of Mr A. Chelley and refer to Excise, as required.' TNA, DEFE 28/102 House Party meeting, 23 March 1949.

³⁶ Dorril, *MI6*, p.147.

³⁷ TNA, DEFE 28/182, A.2. Minute 741 (Based on ACSS minute 727), 20 December 1950.

Soviet officers, and had advised them on how to induce other officers to defect.³⁸ The counterintelligence officers at R.5 appear to have been very interested in his knowledge. He was also consulted regularly about political and military developments in the USSR, his views sought on the implications of the rise and fall of particular Communist politicians and functionaries.³⁹ The JIC had been influenced by his intelligence about the development of Soviet missiles and aircraft, as well as a 'scientific order of battle on Soviet long-range rocket research'; Maddrell judges that he gave 'some insight' into the USSR's armaments policy and 'confirmed that a transformation of Soviet armaments had been launched', one focused on acquiring or developing the highest technology.⁴⁰ He also aided future British and American intelligence gathering ventures by suggesting the rough location of the Kapustin Yar missile test range.⁴¹ His intelligence underlined the value of defectors and was doubtlessly a significant factor in the JIC's adopting a policy late in 1948 of inducing defections.⁴² Initially, the IRD considered Tokaev a propaganda boon. They used his insights in pamphlets circulated to British embassies designed to help them hone their counters to Soviet propaganda, and published some of his writings warning of Soviet aggressive intentions.⁴³ But it is clear that by 1951 SIS was content that it had gained all that it could from Tokaev, and that in some respects he was proving rather troublesome.

He was impulsive, often supplying hearsay (although in several cases, accurate hearsay), and managed to cause at least two quasi diplomatic incidents. The first, in the spring of 1948, involved the unauthorised commandeering of a British military aircraft and a journey to Germany to encourage the defection of an acquaintance, a Russian Colonel, J. D. Tasev. He defected, returned to the UK, then promptly repented and returned, much to the fury of the Soviets, the Foreign Office, the JIC, and the Security Service.⁴⁴ The second, in September of that year, involved a press conference where the IRD had intended to introduce Tokaev to the world as a defector. It 'turned into a near brawl between British officials and Russian journalists.'⁴⁵

Tokaev's occasionally difficult character and questionable objectivity were tolerable in the early years of his defection. (His early handlers **commented** on his state of mind and 'our difficulties in handling him' as early as February 1948.' Others noted their worry that he was 'becoming a little unbalanced'.⁴⁶ But over time various departments steadily downgraded his usefulness. R.5. considered that 'from a purely intelligence aspect, Excise has no further value' in March 1950;⁴⁷ the Northern Department of the Foreign Office considered Tokaev's assessments problematic by the same year, noting that 'our general impression has been that due to the idiosyncrasy of his personal and national temperament EXCISE is inclined to romanticise and to claim "inside information" which

³⁸ See TNA, FO 1093/548, 'EXCISE' Report on 'SMA', 6 February 1948; 'EXCISE' 'Colonel Tyulpanov', 2 February 1948.

³⁹ TNA, DEFE 28/112, LCS to Stewart Menzies, 9 March 1950; DEFE 28/182, Memo 112, 'Changes in the Politburo', 6 April 1949; DEFE 28/182, Memo 116, 'Soviet Leaders', 8 April 1949.

⁴⁰ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.70-1.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.74.

⁴² Ibid, p.76-7.

⁴³ Dorril, *MI6*, p.148.

⁴⁴ Jeffery, *MI6*, p.666.

⁴⁵ Dorril, *MI6*, p.148.

⁴⁶ TNA, FO 1093/548, note to Halford, 12 February, 1948; minute to Halford, 14 February 1948.

⁴⁷ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Wild to Dunderdale, 'EXCISE', 29 March 1950.

we are not satisfied would have been available to an official of his standing.⁴⁸ By December 1950 SIS as a whole deemed him of little intelligence value and was only willing to commit to maintaining his salary subject to six-monthly reviews.⁴⁹

Why keep him on at all? Some people in SIS saw little reason to do so. Wild could note in 1950 that several officers were content 'that there is no further intelligence value to be derived from him, and therefore no reason to keep him "sweet" ...'⁵⁰ But three factors seem to have been crucial in the decision to maintain his financial support. The first was the (very low) potential that he might one day return to the USSR to make contact with former colleagues, and return to the UK with new intelligence. Tokaev had claimed on several occasions that he would be willing to undertake such a mission, although officers at the LCS and SIS appear to have considered this possibility rather fanciful. It was, in Wild's judgement, a consideration that 'needs profound exploration and thought, but should, nevertheless, not be dismissed lightheartedly.'⁵¹ The second factor was Tokaev's lingering propaganda value. Despite his rather troublesome liaison with the IRD, the Soviets continued with their efforts to attempt to discredit him well into 1950. They planted stories in the British press, including in the *Sunday Express*, suggesting that he was a plant who had since re-defected to the USSR with valuable intelligence about the British.⁵² [Other articles questioned aspects of Tokaev's comments on Soviet politics, specifically his allegations that Professor Otto Schimdt, an eminent scientist, appeared to have fallen out of Stalin's favour and disappeared without a trace.](#) Several SIS officers believed that these constituted a concerted effort to discredit him. They also considered it an excellent opportunity to retaliate, discern the purpose of the letters from the Soviet embassy, and develop more intelligence opportunities.⁵³

The third factor was Tokaev's continued significance to the deception machinery at the London Controlling Section. His involvement with the deception planners appears to have begun soon after his defection. [As is noted above, in the discussion over his management and pay, an officer from the LCS was one of his most trusted contacts since 1947.](#)⁵⁴ The relationship seems to have been productive for a longer period of time than that between Tokaev and SIS; the LCS still thought him a valuable asset in 1951. Why did the LCS maintain better relations with the defector over this time? After all, there can be little doubt that it was aware of the Foreign Office and SIS's judgement about Tokaev's reliability. The Foreign Office underlined its doubts about his analysis of current events in the USSR in 1950, noting with regard his conclusions that 'it is impossible to write them off, though the following comments seem to me to suggest that they are, at least, open to some doubt.'⁵⁵ And they knew that SIS saw little reason even to, in their words, 'keep him sweet' by later that same year.⁵⁶ As an officer noted to Sir Maurice Dean in June 1950, the LCS was under no illusion about their troublesome asset.

⁴⁸ TNA, DEFE 28/112, J. Y. Mackenzie (Northern Dpt, Foreign Office), 18 April 1950.

⁴⁹ TNA, DEFE 28/112, A.2. Minute 741 (Based on ACSS minute 727), 20 December 1950.

⁵⁰ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Wild to Dunderdale, 'EXCISE', 29 March 1950.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² TNA, DEFE 28/112, Translation of paragraph entitled 'Active military espionage' 16 March 1950.

⁵³ TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'Recent developments in the Tokaev Case', Wild to 'C', 2 May 1950.

⁵⁴ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Wild to Dunderdale, 'EXCISE', 29 March 1950.

⁵⁵ TNA, DEFE 28/112, J. Y. Mackenzie (Northern Dpt, Foreign Office), 18 April 1950.

⁵⁶ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Wild to Dunderdale, 'EXCISE', 29 March 1950.

I do not find it altogether **easy** to make up my mind about this man. I think there is no doubt that he is a genuine defector with a genuine hatred of the regime, and that he has a wide knowledge of the cross currents in the Politburo and Central Committee circles. Such doubts as I have, arise from the difficulty of making sure that he is objective in the information he gives. He is opinionated and tends to ride particular hobbyhorses, and in using him it will be necessary to make some estimate of the “discount” factor to be applied to information of matters which obviously touch him closely.⁵⁷

He went on to note that Tokaev was ‘a Caucasian whose mind obviously works quite differently from that of the Westerner’, and that they were experiencing some not inconsiderable difficulty in persuading him to produce a statement of his views and proposals. But, nevertheless, that there was little doubt in his mind that Tokaev had a part to play in future develop operations against the Soviet world. As Dean noted: ‘He is after all the only individual we have at our disposal who has served in a position of some responsibility in the Russian central machine.’⁵⁸

Tokaev had something valuable, something the LCS needed: insight. His defection occurred at a propitious time for the LCS. It had only recently been resurrected for the Cold War, having laid rather dormant since the end of the Second World War. It was devising a British deception strategy, developing links with allies, and beginning to implement some schemes. Many of its early plans were extremely ambitious, no doubt betraying an optimism for the craft of deception nurtured during the previous war.⁵⁹ It, however, found the Cold War environment and the Soviet Union a far more challenging adversary than Germany. Two particular problems stood out: first, it was having serious difficulties developing effective channels through which it could stream deceptive material into the USSR. As Noel Wild noted in 1948, ‘a very limited number of double agents have been started, but in each case they have terminated through one cause or another before any useful build up has been achieved’.⁶⁰ The second was the lack of intelligence on practically all aspects of Soviet political and military organisations. Soviet security and counterintelligence was ruthless and effective, limiting the flow of humint to a trickle. Their communications security was also generally excellent. Despite several significant intrusions into Soviet cipher systems, notably the ‘Coleridge’ and ‘Longfellow’ systems, neither Britain nor its allies had sustained access to senior Soviet political discussions through sigint.⁶¹ This meant that they lacked information to plan deceptions, and that they lacked a feedback mechanism once a plan was implemented. Both factors had been crucial to the success of Second World War deception. Tokaev, the LCS believed, could be of value concerning the first problem. He could offer insights they could use to improve their plans. He could offer insights into Soviet strategic fears and anxieties. He could explain what certain political developments in the Kremlin meant for the individuals involved. He could begin explaining to the LCS what made the Soviets tick.

⁵⁷ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Controlling Officer LCS to Maurice Dean, 10 June 1950.

⁵⁸ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Controlling Officer LCS to Maurice Dean, 10 June 1950.

⁵⁹ Some of these early schemes are discussed in Dylan, ‘Super-Weapons and Subversion.’

⁶⁰ TNA, DEFE 28/118, Wild ‘Deception: Report on Progress’, 4 June 1948.

⁶¹ See Aldrich, *GCHQ*, p.78.

Tokaev and planning political deception operations

The LCS consulted Tokaev on several aspects of the USSR's political and cultural composition. It supplied him with questionnaires and its officers read his briefing notes on particular areas, personalities and developments.⁶² It seems that his insights were considered so valuable that he became more than a consultant and was involved in discussions with senior LCS staff committees concerning operational policy and plans. The recently released documents illuminate his links with at least three political deception operations by 1951: the Genocide plot; a scheme to exacerbate splits in the Soviet politburo; and the Antonov plot. All appear to have been the responsibility of the 'House Party' committee – which comprised staff from the LCS and SIS. Each plot remains somewhat mysterious, with only fragmentary details released in the documentary record. But examining these fragments offers an interesting insight into how Tokaev was used and how British deceptions worked early in the Cold War.

Over 1949 and 1950 the House Party committee met at Shell Mex House and at the SLC's headquarters at 2 Ryder Street, where they planned and implemented a number of schemes with the core objective of deterring Soviet adventurism or aggression. Some of these deceptions were based on more standard deterrent principles, such as possessing superior weapons or the ability to deny territory. One notable example involved a fictitious 'death-ray' 'super weapon' that would irradiate Soviet troops amassing at choke points.⁶³ Tokaev became involved with the committee soon after its creation – certainly by February 1949, but probably earlier.⁶⁴ It saw him as an asset. Indeed as it developed its early plans House Party even mused as to the opportunities he and any future defectors might present to foment trouble in the USSR:

'A further step to this at a later date, could be the procurement of a defector, who when safely lodged in this country, could be persuaded to give out, such as Tokaev has done, that when he left Russia, he was fully conscious of the fact that there was dissention in whatever field we decided it should be.'⁶⁵

But its primary concern in February 1949 was to appraise Tokaev's insights into Soviet strategic fears, the fragility of the Soviet political order, and to begin to consider operations designed to exploit these factors with the objective of gaining a degree of deterrence through undermining Soviet confidence in the loyalty or reliability of sections of their population. Indeed, the committee decided to move away from the more ambitious 'super weapon' schemes soon after their conception and concentrate on political deceptions.

⁶² See the undated questionnaire in 'Col Wild's "Special" folder', TNA, DEFE 28/112; see also TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'Important Events', 1 April 1950.

⁶³ See Dylan, 'Super-weapons and Subversion. The idea of inventing a 'death ray' of some sort appears to have lingered in the minds of British deception planners. It was revived in 1954 in a note to the Air Defence Committee Working Party of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, where it was suggested that a fictitious air defence system to deter Soviet bombers could be based on such a concept. S. Twigge and L. Scott, 'Strategic Defence by Deception', *Intelligence and National Security* 16 (2001).

⁶⁴ He is present in a HOUSE PARTY meeting on 22 February 1949, see TNA, DEFE 28/102, 'Meeting with Excise' 22 February 1949, and the document refers to the requirement that has already been given to an individual who remains redacted from the document, it is likely to be Tokaev.

⁶⁵ TNA, DEFE 28/102, 'Deterrent against Russians waging war' undated.

It started with a concept: 'that the Soviets might react in a manner that suited British interests if they could be persuaded that they had problem with internal dissent.'⁶⁶ And this objective was formalised in February 1949 in plan House Party. The core assumption of the plan was that the mass of the Soviet population was a victim of Soviet oppression, 'held down by force' and the security apparatus under the control of the Politburo. The only way the Soviet empire could achieve its economic and military objectives was by compelling the people to implement the will of those in supreme authority. In the event of war, people would be compelled to fight. Therefore, should there be doubt in the minds of Soviet leaders about their ability to bend their people to their will there might be a delay in Soviet economic and military development, the spread of Soviet propaganda, and even committing the USSR to war.

As the LCS explained, 'the object of the plan can be described as follows:

To aim at forcing "The Kremlin" to digress from their present aim of spreading Russian Communism, by creating such suspicions in their minds concerning disaffection within Russia, that it will cause them to divert a substantial amount of attention from their expansionist plans to internal reorganisation."

The reason for adopting this object is, it is suggested, that any internal disaffection and especially amongst those entrusted to enforce the will of the Government, is probably the Politburo's main fear. We are not out to influence the Russian people, the aim is to force the Kremlin to alter their present plans by creating in their minds such a feeling of uneasiness, that further progress outside Russia must be retarded, and the result might be a purge in Russia or some other major readjustment of their internal organisation, any of which would amount to delay, which is so much to our advantage.'⁶⁷

The House Party committee weighed the 'Pros and Cons of the plan' as follows. The disadvantages were that such plans could lead to the exposure of genuine resistance movements; that it could 'at worst' provoke the Soviets to go to war earlier because they felt their grip on the nation was weakening; that the plan would take some time before any results materialised; and it would require a large staff and cost a 'substantial sum of money'. The advantages were that it 'might provoke a purge in Russia against certain sections of the internal organisation'; it might 'compel concentration on Russian internal affairs at the expense of their expansionist plans outside Russia; that it might slow down the progress of the five year plan; that it might deter them from waging war, or at least cause a postponement; the plan could be 'pursued without the knowledge of British government circles. (Foreign Office);' if successful it would be undetected, and could be kept alive and followed up; and that it could lead to confusion within the Politburo at a time when Stalin's succession appeared imminent.'⁶⁸ Content, apparently, that the pros outweighed the cons and the plan might play a role in deterring the Soviets from foreign aggression, House Party resolved to start planning, and one of their early steps was to send Tokaev a questionnaire concerning the strength of the Soviet Union. It requested detail on the weakest links in the country, the most unstable member of the Politburo, who in the armed forces was under suspicion, who were the trusted ambassadors, whether or not there was a Russian resistance movement, whether or not there was any anxiety

⁶⁶ Dylan, 'Super-weapons and Subversion, p.717.

⁶⁷ TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'HOUSE PARTY', 2 February 1949.

⁶⁸ TNA, DEFE 28/102, 'Pros and Cons of the plan' attached to House Party, 2 February 1949.

over the satellites, the MVD or the MGB, and 'where would a "plot" against the Kremlin most likely come from'?⁶⁹

Tokaev briefed John Drew, Director of the deception machinery after 1950, 'Biffy' Dunderdale, and other senior members of the House Party committee on Soviet strategic anxieties four days later, on 22 February 1949. He considered the matter to be complex and resolved to give the committee more details later. Nevertheless, his initial judgement was that the 'southern region in the area of the Caspian Sea was a very vulnerable part of their perimeter defence'. He believed the populous there was very fearful of Soviet authority, more aware of the outside world, and might react if the right revolutionary stimulus was introduced.⁷⁰ An effective plan would have to appear as indigenous, and would probably need to exploit the inherent suspicion of the Caucasian people towards their Moscow rulers. He noted that propaganda was listened to, but had a small effect because of the general ignorance of the population. **But manipulating literature could be effective ways to stir resentment.** A possible line of attack could be targeting the authority of Stalin, for instance by publicising that his book, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, which was essentially the manual for every Soviet citizen, had not been written by Stalin ('**Out of 350 pages, 26 were written by Stalin, and these were so illiterate, that had to be re-drafted**'). House Party concurred that all deceptions needed to appear as though they were indigenous, but were wary of pursuing plots that would prompt a purge of the Soviet people. This, it judged, 'would therefore act adversely ultimately against any Russian resistance that might otherwise back outside help.'⁷¹ It knew that if it proceeded and implemented the plan, it must tread carefully. It resolved to meet Tokaev again in March to discuss the matter further.

In the interim, the committee gave Dunderdale more precise instructions about what they needed from Tokaev to aid their plans. They needed specifics: names of regime figures whom they should target; an assessment of which politburo faction was most vulnerable; whether or not it would be possible to drive a wedge between the armed services and the politburo; whether it was the politburo or the services that would ultimately take the USSR to war; whether or not the Soviet Academies could be used as channels for deceptive information.⁷² Tokaev was given about three days to dwell on it, and on 3 March briefed to the committee. He did so with characteristic drama – the kind that made many people wary of accepting his information at face value – with an express request that his contribution be kept of the utmost secrecy, and with a stark warning that Britain should be vigilant against Soviet attempts to send false defectors pedalling misleading information to the West. The minutes note his exhortation: 'He warned... In fact, we could trust EXCISE but should be very careful with all others. EXCISE contrasted himself with KRAVCHENKO. KRAVCHENKO had chosen personal freedom: EXCISE had defected in order to fight for the freedom of Russia.'⁷³

But he also offered specific recommendations. One recommendation concerned a rift in the Soviet Politburo. This was a weakness that might be exploited. He went on to explain to House Party that

⁶⁹ TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'Excise' questionnaire, 18 February 1949.

⁷⁰ TNA, DEFE 28/112, House Party, Meeting with Excise, 22 February 1949.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² TNA, DEFE 28/112, Minutes of House Party Committee, 28 February 1949.

⁷³ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Meeting with Excise, 3 March 1949. Alexandre Kravchenko had worked for Soviet counterintelligence in SMERSH and subsequently for the NKVD in Germany before defecting to the Americans in June 1947.

there was discord 'amounting to a serious rift between two main factions.' One faction was the Malenkov and Mikoyan faction, which Stalin was party to. These were, according to Tokaev, '(relative) moderates and idealists, who believe that the World Communist State should come about by revolutions.' The second faction was led by Molotov. This faction was far more aggressive, had considerable support in the armed forces and believed 'in a **policy** of "conquer first and communise afterwards".' Stalin was having difficulty in managing Molotov, but the Malenkov faction was on good terms with Beria, then head of the MGB and the NVD.⁷⁴ The root of the rift was dissent over a decision taken in February 1943 for the 'liquidation' of several autonomous national groups in the USSR. Over 1.8 million people were affected. Malenkov and Mikoyan had refused to sign their approval for the operations citing fear for the ill-feeling it would cause, concern over collective punishment, and the possible fallout should the story become public knowledge.⁷⁵ Tokaev **went on to supply** the committee with a more detailed analysis of which peoples had been affected, and noted that he would be 'very glad to meet representatives of the press...' to discuss the matter further and to counter the Soviet official pronouncements on the matter which downplayed the deportations and the killing very significantly, referring only to two areas that had been affected.⁷⁶

Tokaev and the LCS proceeded to discuss how best to use his insights to achieve British objectives.

The LCS judged that there were at least two opportunities identifiable in the situation, one concerning the deportations and the genocide, the other related more directly to the politburo split. Regarding the first aspect, they discussed drawing the public's attention to the deportations as a way to exploit the event. The LCS considered that it could discredit the Soviet leaders internationally, and that it could sow discord within the Politburo ('the Malenkov group would be in a "told you so" position') and weaken the regime.⁷⁷ **Indeed, events in the United Nations would bear out this point soon after their discussion with Tokaev.** The Soviets were attacked for their record on forced labour and their refusal to publish statistics and found it difficult to counter the charges with anything other than accusations of their own. Foreign Office officials seem to have enjoyed putting their Soviet counterparts on the spot and encouraged the IRD to continue producing material on the subjects.⁷⁸

The LCS, meanwhile, considered – and probably agreed with – Tokaev's view that, ideally, the story (and any deceptive embellishments) should be seen to have their origin from outside the West (and Israel, which would, apparently, have been a distasteful origin of the story from a Caucasian perspective).⁷⁹ But some also sounded a note of caution. There could be little doubt that there was considerable anger in the USSR concerning the treatment of the regions, and therefore considerable potential for exploitation. **But the question of whether or not Tokaev, himself a Caucasian, was a neutral enough observer lingered.** The committee resolved to consider what SIS and the Foreign

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Meeting with Excise, 3 March 1949.

⁷⁶ TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'Statement on mass genocide in the South of the Soviet Union (USSR)', undated.

⁷⁷ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Meeting with Excise, 3 March 1949. Tokaev believed that the LCS should find a means of delivering its material through Pandit Nehru, but they also considered Turkey or Iran as the event could resonate powerfully with Muslim communities.

⁷⁸ TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'Intel' Memorandum 137, 14 March 1949. See also Defty *Britain, America, and Anti-Communist Propaganda*, 77.

⁷⁹ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Meeting with Excise, 3 March 1949.

Office made of the situation, and to consult Tokaev on the best means of implementing any plan that they devised.⁸⁰

The discussion of the second possible operation drew upon a wider range of expertise. House Party consulted the Foreign Office for its views on the developments in the Politburo; ('Sir Maurice Peterson's remarks concerning Marshal Stalin's efforts to maintain a balance between Molotov and Mikoyan, were noted with interest.')

⁸¹ The Committee concluded that an ongoing ministerial reshuffle in Moscow was consistent with the rift, but may not be directly linked, and that 'any success which might be achieved in an attempt to discredit Vishinsky or Gromyko (who appear to be Molotov men) would probably redound [sic] to our advantage.'

⁸² These two could be tarred through a variety of means, including 'deliberate leakages through tapped telephones', 'deliberately insecure coded telegrams'.⁸³ Obviously, 'if any "framing" were to be done, a great deal of detailed information concerning biographies, private habits etc, of the individuals would be required'.⁸⁴

House Party once again turned to Tokaev before coming to a determination about how best to exploit the Politburo split. He briefed several SIS and LCS **officers on his interpretation of developments in Moscow**. He judged that Stalin had strengthened his own position and that Molotov was 'definitely on the down grade'. And that further evidence of this might soon become visible by observing the fortunes of **a Molotov**, the President of the RSFSR Soviet, Radinov, who had been appointed in 1946 against Stalin's wishes. His fate might serve as a barometer, Tokaev judged, **as Stalin might act relatively cautiously in removing his competitors on the Politburo lest it reveal the scale of the rift**.⁸⁵ **Tokaev supplemented this assessment with more** background information on the cause of the rift, explaining how Mikoyan had alienated himself from his colleagues. He related an event **from August 1947 where Mikoyan has isolated himself from Malenkov and Zhdanov over the creation of the COMINFORM; and another** where Mikoyan fell out with his colleagues over the decision not to invite the Finish Communist party to be represented on the COMINFORM. Mikoyan had also, apparently, spoke out in favour of accepting Marshall aid from the US. He had not been purged because of support from other Politburo members, principally Stalin. Based upon all of this, Tokaev judged that Mikoyan 'was our most promising ally within the Politburo...'.⁸⁶

These insights formed the basis of the LCS's discussions on how to use the 'deportation' story to exacerbate the rift in the politburo and 'generally embarrass' the Soviet regime. It requested that Tokaev 'should prepare a paper giving in tabulated form his suggestions of action which should be taken, and his estimate of likely reactions by the other side'.⁸⁷ Tokaev complied; his report remains retained from the relevant files. But there is no doubt that he continued to advise the committee on the significance of various developments in the Politburo: he sent the Committee notes concerning his analyses of the fortunes of A. A. Andreev, Voznesenski, Molotov, Mikoyan, Andreev, and Vasili

⁸⁰ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Minutes of House Party meeting, 7 March 1949.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² TNA, DEFE 28/112, Minutes of House Party meeting, 7 March 1949.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Meeting with EXCISE, 14 March, 1949.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Stalin over the following month.⁸⁸ Tokaev, the mercurial defector, appears to have been one of the primary consultants on Soviet matters to the LCS.

House Party met again to discuss the Politburo rift and 'the weapon' deception plans late in March 1949. They discussed the intelligence on various Kremlin figures who had been conspicuous by their absence recently, such as Vishinsky; they discussed, and agreed with, the British Ambassador's reports from Moscow and his opinion that Molotov had suffered a setback; and dwelt on the lack of information about developments in Moscow and whether or not Stalin had reasserted his authority. This final point was crucial to their deliberations of whether or not to proceed with any plans to exploit any splits in the politburo.⁸⁹ The committee had very little supplementary information that could support their deliberations on implementing Tokaev's scheme. Given their relative ignorance of developments in the Kremlin, many members of the committee believed that continuing with an operation exploiting cracks in the politburo was very problematic. This was a sign of things to come for the LCS: the lack of contemporary, deep insight into the Soviet political and military machine would bedevil the British deception planners for years to come.

Nevertheless, Sir Brian Mountain, Chairman of House Party, urged the committee to proceed with planning operations based on the mass deportations, which could have an impact whatever the state of Politburo unity. To this end they discussed Tokaev's plan and concluded that 'it had certain obvious weaknesses, but though it was not the ideal instrument for opening a campaign, it would be a useful subsidiary implement.'⁹⁰ The main weakness, in Col. Wild's judgement, was that it proposed an attack from the outside, rather to ferment trouble from within.⁹¹ (This is curious given Tokaev's previous insistence that any operation must appear indigenous, but coming to a final judgement is difficult without access to the document.) However, the committee retained their faith in Tokaev. Wild proposed that they adopt another operation, 'the Antonov project', and the defector remained crucial to this new, more targeted scheme. This became plan 1; the genocide and deportations plan became plan 2.

The rapid evolution of these plans suggest several things about the nature of the LCS at this point. It clearly remained a flexible and nimble organisation. It was able to integrate new information, change course as required, and appears to have retained positive working relationships with sister departments, such as the IRD, whilst doing so. They also retained an aggressive instinct, believing that deception was a viable tool in blunting the Soviet offensive. The experience of the Second World War and the legacy of creativity and boldness no doubt contributed to this. But the speed at which the LCS had to adjust and fettle its operations underlined the degree to which it was operating in very unfamiliar territory, struggling to apply the lessons of the war to a new situation to which they often were not suited. The great deceptions that had worked so well against the Nazis proved very difficult to replicate without the required level of insight, feedback, and the right channels. Targeting the Soviets required stepping back, designing more precise operations, and learning how

⁸⁸ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Note No.114 on 'Changes in the Politburo', 6 April 1949; Note No.116 'Soviet Leaders' 8 April 1949; 'Memorandum on Mikoyan', undated.

⁸⁹ TNA, DEFE 28/102, House Party meeting, 23 March 1949.

⁹⁰ TNA, DEFE 28/102, House Party meeting, 23 March 1949.

⁹¹ Ibid.

they would react to any stimulus. Tokaev's great utility in these early days was to give the required to support the learning process.

Plan 1, the Antonov plan, was in several senses a step back to the drawing board to gauge what type of operation was viable. It involved sowing discord by framing a Soviet officer.⁹² Antonov had a history of subversive activity but had survived 'through the betrayal of some of his comrades'.⁹³ House Party believed that if the MGB took possession of incriminating materials 'a chain reaction of purge could be started within the General Staff of the Soviet Army, which if skilfully encouraged from without, might involve very important personalities, and cause the regime very serious embarrassment.'⁹⁴ Tokaev was, in House Party's view, crucial for the 'framing' of Antonov. They explained that:

This 'encouragement' could be supplied by [redacted, but highly likely to be 'Tokaev' whose name, but not codename, is consistently redacted in the file] giving to the press, after news of Antonov's purge had leaked out, information incriminating other prominent Soviet citizens at present unsuspected by the MGB. The MGB would certainly follow this up, and finding Excise's charges well founded, would be the more receptive to his further revelations. At a suitable moment the genocide or deportation story would be brought into play.⁹⁵

The committee created a planning team, comprising Wild, Drew, Kirby, and probably Dunderdale (although the name remains redacted), and ordered that this team would have access to the mysterious Mr Chelley, 'and refer to Excise, as required'.⁹⁶ They would produce a plan, subject to Sir Stuart Menzies', then Chief of SIS, or 'C', approval – and do so promptly, as Tokaev was required by the Foreign Office and the IRD to help with their propaganda efforts by writing a pamphlet concerning living conditions in the Caucasus, and in the areas of the USSR bordering the Middle East. The IRD planned to translate and distribute the pamphlet in the relevant areas. House Party determined that 'the deportation story should play its part in the House Party plan before being "blown" as routine propaganda.'⁹⁷ The chairman, Brian Mountain, concluded the meeting by noting 'that whether or not we achieved our main object of disrupting the Politburo, we could not fail to score some points, and we should therefore fire ahead'.⁹⁸

The working party did indeed fire ahead. By 11 April they produced a plan, the objective of which was 'to shake the confidence of the Soviet leaders by convincing them that a powerful subversive movement was well established.'⁹⁹ They did so in an environment of some confusion over the power struggles in the politburo. Tokaev judged that Molotov was out of favour; an unnamed individual thought otherwise, and won the argument. It was also unclear whether or not their proposed plot could endanger any genuine resistance networks, although Tokaev was certain they would not.

⁹² The outline of this plan is discussed in Huw Dylan, 'Super-Weapons and Subversion: British Deterrence by Deception Operations in the Early Cold War', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38/5 (2015)

⁹³ TNA, DEFE 28/102, House Party meeting, 23 March 1949.

⁹⁴ DEFE 28/102, House Party meeting, 23 March 1949.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ TNA, DEFE 28/102, House Party meeting, 23 March 1949.

⁹⁹ TNA, DEFE 28/102, House Party meeting, 11 April 1949.

Conversely, he was optimistic about the potential positive outcomes of the operation. The most likely victims would be Antonov's close associates, some of whom were in relatively senior positions, and the risk they faced might prompt them to defect. 'This in itself, even if the plan were not entirely successful, would be a very high dividend'.¹⁰⁰

The committee agreed, and adopted the plan. It decided seeks 'C's' to approval as soon as possible – apparently telling the Foreign Office as little as possible in the process – and, **pending approval of the plan in full, to secure his permission for preliminary 'build-up' radio operations. It also considered the requirements for implementation in general.** The first element was the requirement for a specialist radio operator whose job would be to broadcast the 'build-up' material concerning Antonov. The ideal candidate for this role appears to have been a Soviet Naval telegraphist who had deserted and was in the custody of British authorities in Germany.¹⁰¹ **His broadcasts were highly likely to reach Soviet ears and attention, the committee considered; after all, the 'Soviet monitor service was very comprehensive'.**¹⁰² The second factor was a technical issue that had to be resolved for the premise of the story to remain credible. This was the correct placement of the broadcast station. The proximity of US listening posts in the UK made it an undesirable base, and the potential for Soviet direction finding to undermine the plan meant that the consultation and advice of technical experts was crucial. The third factor concerned the details of the story framing Antonov. This remained the responsibility of the planning team, but principally Mr Chelley who would work with the help of Tokaev.¹⁰³

The precise nature of how the plan proceeded thereafter is unclear, and will remain so until more documents are released. Several factors suggest that it did indeed gain 'C's' approval, and was subsequently implemented. The first of these is a reference to the plan in a letter from the LCS's Col. Wilt to MIS's Guy Liddell, to which he attaches several notes concerning ongoing deception operations, including 'Plan 1: Antonov'.¹⁰⁴ The second is a note from Tokaev, dated almost a year later on 1 April 1950, stating that he attached 'very great importance to the fact that Army General Antonov has appeared in Georgia....'¹⁰⁵ He goes on to chide the LCS for not having implemented their operation quickly enough: 'I am very much afraid that again you did not act quickly enough in the matter of ANTONOV. It is another example showing that ordinary methods are not applicable in matters relating to the USSR. Speed and decision are essential if results are to be achieved.'¹⁰⁶ The third is a note from February 1951 detailing a conversation between Wild, Tokaev and Chelley, where they discuss the continuing political turmoil in the USSR, including the Leningrad purges, Stalin's interview with Pravda, unrest in the Caucasus, Baku, and in the Middle Volga region.¹⁰⁷ An interesting component of the discussions concerns the discussions concerning an individual codenamed IVLEV, who Tokaev considered to be a prominent opposition figure in Moscow 'known to the MVD as one of the few who have access to the secret telephone system', but who they have

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, DEFE 28/118, Wild to Liddell, 22 April 1949.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'Important events', 1 April 1949.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, DEFE 28/102, 'Notes on conversation between Wild, Chelley and EXCISE', 13 February 1951.

not been able to identify.¹⁰⁸ Tokaev believed that he was probably a member of the Central Committee, and suggested that his name could be used to authenticate a series of radio messages tied to an operation codenamed FLITTER.

It is likely that FLITTER is the codename for the operations designed to discredit members of the Soviet establishment, and to create the impression of an underground resistance movement in the USSR.¹⁰⁹ By February 1951, they were in their ninth series – a series appearing to last about 14 days – and based on Tokaev's advice the latest messages would contain 'For Ivlev. Instructions received. Am awaiting new orders'. And 'Where is Andryanov. Kozyol in contact with Ivlev, but act carefully.'¹¹⁰ Based on Tokaev's advice they would also target the secretary of the Baku central committee, Bagirov. He was, by all accounts, disliked locally. Tokaev suggested that, first, rumours be spread that he was responsible for a series of purges that had taken place since 1948, bringing him into disrepute with the local population. And, second, that links be created between troubles in Leningrad and instability in Baku, to draw the attention of the MVD. This could then be exacerbated by some strategic pamphleteering, the content of which Tokaev would draft. FLITTER remains mysterious, the files retained, but the available evidence suggests that the defector's input was extremely valuable in designing what appears to have been a long term deception project, an offshoot of Plan 1, the Antonov plan, designed to encourage the Soviets to focus internally.

Plan 1, the Antonov plan, and its possible subsequent development into FLITTER suggest that Tokaev remained valuable to the LCS for a number of years, possibly up to 1953 or even 1955 – a significant period beyond the point SIS believed his value exhausted. They were not the sole plans to which he contributed. The files contain details of his contributions to at least three more. One relates to the aforementioned tussle between Tokaev and the Soviet **Embassy in Britain that occurred** in the pages of the Sunday Express. **The LCS aimed to exploit it in order to ascertain the Soviets' true motives and hit back, noting that whatever 'the cause and purpose of these "incidents", the correspondence with the Sunday Express provides a welcome opportunity for retaliation of some sort.'**¹¹¹ Tokaev penned **a robust letter in response, attempting to draw more information out of the Soviets.** Another operation concerns the exploitation of the USSR's history of mass deportation and genocides. **The detail is sparse, but Tokaev appears to have been consulted on the British government's attempts to maximise the propaganda impact of these events.**¹¹² Yet another political operation is tangentially referred to in a letter between the LCS and Maurice Dean.¹¹³ And his opinion continued to be sought on matters beyond operational detail. He remained a consultant on developments in Soviet politics and security affairs.¹¹⁴ Many considered his inputs rather prejudiced as time wore on, and became **increasingly** reluctant to take them at face value. But he also provided more specific detailed information that may have facilitated other operations. One example of this is his detailed description of political developments and sentiments, military, security and intelligence facilities in

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ A short discussion of this operation is available in Huw Dylan, 'Super-weapons and Subversion: British deterrence by deception operations in the early Cold War', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38/5 (2015), pp.716-720.

¹¹⁰ TNA, DEFE 28/102, 'Notes on conversation between Wild, Chelly and EXCISE', 13 February 1951.

¹¹¹ TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'Recent developments in the Tokaev Case', Wild to 'C', 2 May 1950.

¹¹² TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'Genocide', undated.

¹¹³ TNA, DEFE 28/112, Controlling Officer to Maurice Dean, 10 June 1950.

¹¹⁴ See for example, 'Copy of message dictated by [...] on telephone', 12 July 1950.

Dzauzhikau (present day Vladikavkaz).¹¹⁵ Tokaev also remained busy supporting the IRD during this period. Indeed, throughout 1950 he encouraged the IRD and the LCS to take a more aggressive stance in their propaganda against the Soviet Union.¹¹⁶

Conclusion: Grigori Tokaev, the London Controlling Section, Cold War defectors and deception

Defectors have proven extremely valuable to the West throughout the Cold War and beyond: from Tokaev's **significant**, although flawed insights into the Soviet strategic programme and to Gouzenko's revelations concerning Soviet espionage in Canada and the United States in the 1940s, on to Gordievsky and Mitrokhin in the 1980s and 1990s. Such was the secrecy of the USSR that the West was often, even generally, restricted to observing it from the outside in with high technology. The defector could offer the view from the inside, and often prompted significant changes in the West's understanding or rhetoric.¹¹⁷ MI5 noted in 1948 that 'defectors had been, in fact, a major if not the Chief source of our knowledge of the Russian Intelligence Service, and in the absence of other sources they are likely to be so for some time to come.'¹¹⁸ They were correct. But defectors also come with considerable baggage, could generate diplomatic incidents, and generate a difficult counter-intelligence problem for the receiving service. The case of Tokaev shows the difficulties of effectively managing defectors very clearly, but also the opportunities.

What does the new evidence tell us about Tokaev; what does it tell us about Cold War deception? It confirms that Tokaev was a significant defector at a significant time. British agencies lacked information and insight about Soviet capabilities and intentions at a time of considerable strategic change. Tokaev could offer perspectives on a variety of issues, technological and scientific, political and military. He was therefore of great interest to a number of British policy, intelligence and propaganda departments. The new documents reveal a new perspective on his work, however: the fact that he worked closely with one of Britain's most secretive organisations. He worked with the LCS as a consultant, but was also involved in operational planning. They utilised his knowledge of Soviet personnel, strategic anxiety, and security culture to plan and implement political deceptions with the objective of deterring the Soviets from adventurism in Western Europe. His involvement with the deception organisation appears to have continued for longer than his involvement with other British intelligence agencies. Indeed, Tokaev was utilised more widely and for longer than has previously been considered. There is nothing to challenge the assessment that his information on Soviet strategic technology was useful in some cases, but misleading in others. **There is much to confirm that SIS, the IRD, the Foreign Office, and the LCS considered him very useful, and that they could cooperate well in 'sharing' him for their various requirements, but that they also found him**

¹¹⁵ TNA, DEFE 28/112, 'Dzauzhikau' the date is faded but appears to be from 1950 circa July.

¹¹⁶ See TNA, DEFE 28/112, Note from Tokaev 'Friendly advice' and 'special request', 15 February 1950.

¹¹⁷ The literature on defectors is quite substantial, consider N. West 'Cold War intelligence defectors' in L. K. Johnson (ed) *Handbook of Intelligence Studies* (Routledge, Oxon, 2009) as a starting point, as well as collaborations between Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, and later with Vasili Mitrokhin: *KGB: the Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1990); *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (Penguin, London, 2009).

¹¹⁸ TNA, FO 1093/551, 'A Study of Defectors from the USSR', August 1948.

rather difficult to manage on occasion, both in terms of his personal arrangements and in terms of distilling his political analysis for fact, hearsay, and embellishments.

The history of Tokaev and the LCS casts a little more light on several aspects of Britain's deception operations during the early Cold War. It underlines the worry in Whitehall regarding the development of Soviet strategic strength and their ideological offensive in the face of relative British weakness. It illustrates that some considered deception a valuable tool that could be used to redress the balance and achieve a measure of deterrence, years before Britain has its own nuclear weapon.¹¹⁹ Tokaev's involvement with the LCS also reminds us that planning and implementing deception operations against the USSR was a very difficult task in the late 1940s. The successes of the Second World War had taught the British several valuable lessons about the craft, but a key element of these lessons was that deceptions needed to be attuned with the target's belief system and therefore based on good intelligence. Successful operations needed to be largely based on what the target already believed to be true, and to exploit their preconceptions.¹²⁰ Because of good intelligence the allies understood the Nazi regime. But the Soviet security state had been remarkably successful in controlling political and military information, in restricting the movement of its people, and in preventing defectors. (Indeed, when it came to pen a study on defectors and their motives in 1948, the Security Service could only list 20 major defections from the USSR since 1927.¹²¹) Despite the difficulties they faced in managing him, Tokaev could offer the deception organisation a small element of the advantage they had in designing their great wartime deceptions, a fragment of what made the Soviets tick. He gave the LCS a glimpse behind the iron curtain, and was therefore a valuable asset to the organisation as it attempted to deter and unsettle Stalin's Soviet Union.

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¹¹⁹ For more discussion of this see Huw Dylan, 'Super-weapons and Subversion: British deterrence by deception operations in the early Cold War', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38/5 (2015).

¹²⁰ See J. C. Masterman's *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, (London: Yale University Press, 1972)

¹²¹ FO 1093/551, 'A Study of Defectors from the USSR', August 1948.